

DOCTORIAL THESES INCIPIT NIETZKY

Marginalia to the late Nietzsche's ideas on aesthetics and nihilism

The great philosophical themes of oblivion, erasure and remembrance can be thought or they are worth to be thought in different ways since Nietzsche. The above mentioned philosophemes designate the sphere of thought of this dissertation in the widest sense. While in a narrower sense, I discuss some peculiar features of the idea of nihilism in the works of the late Nietzsche – that is to say the one after the *Zarathustra*, with special regard to some more general aesthetic relations and the Dostoevsky-experience, especially the philosopher's reading of *The Possessed*.

The task seemed to be obvious: I must read round the philosopher's extracts about the novel, his commentaries on this work, and the context of the Dostoevsky-interpretation and the idea of the Nietzschean nihilism must be outlined. The present dissertation is conceptualized from this point.

After J. Ritter (*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*) and J. S. Tuusvuori (*Nietzsche and Nihilism. Exploring a Revolutionary Conception of Philosophical Conception*), it seemed to be very evident to treat the *Begriffsgeschichte* as a complementary element. Therefore I rather started with the examination of that cont(in)ent element called 'European nihilism' by Heidegger and Löwith on the basis of Nietzsche and as the heir of which G. Vattimo – also according to Nietzsche – puts it: „an accomplished nihilism today is our only chance”. But what is the nihilism interpreted in this way about?

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One of the most wide-spread ideas is that the Occident, the West – not in a narrow, geographical sense – actually was born from the intertwining of two great traditions: from the intertwining of the Greek-Latin one and the Jewish-Christian one. We can meet with the most diverse variations of this thought. In accordance with a strong variation, 'Europe', the 'West' is, in fact, a result of 'the compromise of Athens and Jerusalem' till nowadays, thus it essentially has two constitutive elements. We can read elsewhere that Paul of Tharsus covered just the whole of the there and that time known universe with the Greek-Jewish dichotomy – the softer formulation permits that this or that has happened with 'us' ever since, by means of which the Occident leans against more pillars instead of two by today.

An eternally returning motive of Nietzsche's writings may be set against the strong variation – in other words against the concept of the Occident conceived as the compromise of Athens and Jerusalem. This motive appears now piano now fortissimo, now forgotten then rediscovered from the beginning, say, from *The Birth of the Tragedy*, moreover from the early works, studies on classical philology and lectures published under the title of *Ifjúkori görög tárgvű irások* in Hungarian till the *Wahnsinnzettels* designating the mental collapse, thus extending over the whole oeuvre.

First, in my paper I would like to meditate on the state of this Nietzschean opposition (the first and second chapter). This meditation serves, so to speak, as a preamble to the mostly aesthetical examination of the consequence condensed in the late period, i.e. of the philosopher's nihilism-concept (third chapter). Thus the dissertation is built up from altogether three chapters. Each chapter contains one thesis.

According to my first thesis, the opposition to the compromise of Athens and Jerusalem is very internal. For Nietzsche, the West exists, in addition it exists eminently; he considers the genesis and also the present of the occident as the coincidence of the Jewish-

rooted Christianity and by the Greek preliminaries preceded Latinity. It turns out that from the point of view of the philosopher, this coincidence is destined from the first. It must be stressed once more: Nietzsche has indeed something to say in connection with this strong concept.

I propose in my second thesis the following: Nietzsche objects to the conception declaring the Jewish-Christian and Greek-Latin duality because it misses the stress. Since the Jewish-Christian fundament is not only one constitutive element, but *the* remaining element. If you like: the compromise of Athens and Jerusalem is not an agreement between two equal sides. Nietzsche sees the origin of the victory of Jerusalem in a self-destroying tendency within the Greek culture: 'Socrates, the first theoretical man' (*The Birth of the Tragedy*); 'the Platonism' (for example *Beyond Good and Evil*). Because the Greek world view, the Greek culture is responsible for its own collapse, in this manner Nietzsche dissociates himself from the contemporary anti-Semitism. According to Nietzsche the remaining element influences our notion on another – on the prevailing Other. We are still 'moral', thus we are 'Platonists' leading the 'Christianity' to victory. From this point of view, it is a mistake to believe that we are not any more; that for example we would have emancipated ourselves by the Renaissance, by the Enlightenment, by the modernity.

My third and last thesis consists in that Nietzsche who makes an effort to dissolve the agreement of Athens and Jerusalem – a deal in accordance with him succeeded badly – chooses neither Athens, nor the preclassical Greek culture before Socrates without further ado. 'We must go beyond the Greeks.' My conclusion is that Nietzsche 'remains inside' indeed and achieves the furthest point but not in a Heideggerian sense, not in the sense of a reversed, perverted Platonism achieving the furthest point of the occidental metaphysics. Achieving the furthest point is the cruel and honest facing the death of the Jewish-Christian God. Polarized: Nietzsche who had wanted to slip into the clothes of the Antichrist in the months before he went mad is truly a reversed Paul. Finally, he arrives at there is no Greek, no Jew anymore and there is something else less and less too. We, moderns are nothing and will be even more nothing. We would be the heirs of two great basic myths essentially, of the antique one and the Jewish-Christian one, and these myths are (self-)destroying. The chance is only possible through this self-destroying as fulfillment. One of the attempts of reckoning with all this is the draft of the concept of nihilism. Outlines remained but not some sort of final summary. This fact would have contributed to that the concept of nihilism was challenged exceptionally and uniquely (according to the philosopher too) by reading Dostoevsky, especially by *The Possessed*.

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In close connection with all this the idea of nihilism conceptualized by Nietzsche has multiple aesthetic aspects. On the one hand in so far as we are not devoted to the narrow starting-point of the history of notion but prefer the conceptual approach so much *The Birth of the Tragedy* already indicates the aesthetic interest of the Nietzschean conception of *The Birth of the Tragedy*. Let's think of the noteworthy passage: 'Only as *aesthetic phenomenon* can the world [and the *Dasein*] be *justified* to all eternity.' Or let's consider the Nietzschean self-interpretation of the mentioned locus in the late preface of the work creating an explicit relation to nihilism – moreover, so to speak, it places himself and his piece of writing within the 'pessimist' prehistory of nihilism. On the other hand albeit discovering of the great theme of the nihilism is already there at the beginning of Nietzsche's oeuvre and recent textual critical examinations – going beyond even the Colli-Montinari critical edition – have pointed out that the philosopher knew the expression 'nihilism' and rarely uses it from the mid-sixties. But he exerts himself to work out his own conception on nihilism in touch with aesthetic formulations of the question as it can be inferred from the late fragments just in his

late period. It must be emphasized that the concept of nihilism would have been a significant element of the deceased principal work which had been planned for a long time but had been never realized and was abandoned by a deliberate decision. Thirdly, as we hinted at it a short while ago, this concept of nihilism was challenged without precedent by an eminently aesthetic experience, i. e. by Dostoevsky's writings and first and foremost by *The Possessed*.

The stint of reading which I set myself seemed to be frightening because the comparison between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky is difficult to look over and is an enormous material within the Nietzsche-literature of boundless quantity. But the interpretation supported by philology may be narrowed down a lesser circle of works – it is evidently bound up with the lengthy delay of the critical editions of the two oeuvres. Further more, the hitherto examination of Nietzsche's outlines on *The Possessed* is just the development of the seventies and eighties and this development may only be hallmarked by the names of two researchers: C. A. Miller and J. Davidov. Though nor even they deal with that striking fact that the Nietzschean reading, outlining, commenting, etc. of *The Possessed* coincide with the culmination of the concept of nihilism and later with the beginning of the lingering withdrawal of the systematic elaboration and the summary in an only work. I sum up my dissertation with a meditation on this coincidence.

My two translations can be read in the appendix (M. Heidegger: *The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead'*, Jean Paul: *The Speech of the Dead Christ from the Cross*); both intertextualize, interpret and frame the Nietzschean concept of nihilism as a literal or philosophical text with great influence.